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TALON



**Task Force Blue Steel troops
educate children in a colorful way**

Inside this issue:

Psyops soldiers design coloring book

Tuzla orphanage visit is time well spent

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TALON

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From the Editor...

There's something a little different about this issue of the Talon. Give up? Although it is written for the soldiers of Multinational Division (North), the entire issue deals with a subject near and dear to many of our hearts — children.

Although we are all part of a family here — the Army family — we could not do what we do without the support of our loved ones back home. Your children, wives, husbands, brothers and sisters all support you and that is how you are able to do your

job more than 4,000 miles from home.

When asked why he or she joined the Army, soldiers have many answers. In my opinion, one of the most impressive answers I've heard recently is "I do it so my kids will enjoy the freedoms I have enjoyed in my life."

When you think about the future you can't help but wonder what kind of life your kids will live. I sincerely hope you enjoy the stories in this issue of the Talon. It is dedicated to the future — the kids.

My Daddy has to go away.
But he told me it was only for a little while.
Mommy says daddy is protecting us.
I don't understand.
But my daddy is a good protector.

He saves me from Josh's mean dog.
Some mean people hurt some other people who didn't do anything.
I guess he's going to help them like he helps me.
They better watch out.

My daddy is in the Army.
I miss you daddy.
Come home soon.

*~ found by a janitor
in an elementary
school*

Word on the street...

"How do you feel about your mom or dad being in Bosnia?"



Marlisha Russell
Madison, Ala.
Daughter of
Sgt. Richard Russell

"I am happy my dad is helping other people but I wish I could see him for Thanksgiving and Christmas.."



Bianca Nati
Carbondale, Pa.
Daughter of
Maj. Dominick Nati

"I miss my dad most when I go swimming and on trips."

About the covers. FRONT — Pfc. Paul Granville, driver, A Co., 1st Bn., 109th Inf., spent some time coloring and playing with a student at Sehahid Bolic-Bolo Primary School in Olovo. *Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Kelly Luster.* **BACK** — Letters from Southwest Elementary School, Lebanon, Pa. *Illustration by Sgt. 1st Class Kelly Luster.*



Aubrey Starr Bennett
Scott Township, Pa.
Daughter of
Spc. Robert Bennett

"I love daddy. I am proud of him for helping everyone and protecting them from the bad guys. I want him to come home soon."





Task Force Eagle
Stabilization Force
SFOR XII
Bosnia-Herzegovina



Maj. David Tish
Task Force Talon
Chaplain

Many of us have stood in the delivery room or watched through the nursery window. We gazed at our new “special gift” as he or she was laid in our arms. Grinning from ear to ear, our hearts burst with joy and

Chaplain's Corner... “These Little Children”

love. We were so proud, this was our child, ours to love, to cherish, and yes, to raise.

Now, go with me to Tuzla Orphanage, or any other location with children in the BiH area, and walk the hallways and the grounds there. There are plenty of children, but where are the moms and dads? The children are all alone, raised by staff and “big brothers or sisters.” They have a roof over their heads, a bed to sleep in, and adequate food, but most possess no creature comforts to which many children are accustomed. No one to love them,

cherish them, or treat them as “wanted.” I thank those who are providing for them, but is there more to be done?

Yes, some of us desire and strive to share. We came here to continue the political peace process, and in numerous ways, contribute to the welfare of the people. Most of us just want a reason to give and to share. Our children at home are blessed.

How can I widen my horizon for children in this part of our world? Can we become “surrogate” parents, take these children “under our wings,” and just share with them? We can.

Recently, Task Force Talon collected money and purchased shoes for many of these children. The greatest joy of this moment was watching the children's faces as they realized these are “my” shoes. This is just one of the many attempts to aid the children and families of our local BiH community.

Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me.” Can we do any less by our actions in the lives of these children? We want to make an impact on our world! Let's start right here, with these children. You can make a difference.

Patrol Alert... Safety is in the eyes of the beholder

by Maj. Shawn Mell

Public Affairs Officer

Imagine being on a patrol in a small village. You turn the corner and there stands a young boy holding a pistol. Before you know it, he pulls the slide to the rear and aims straight for your chest. You have a split second to react. What would you do?

That is exactly the question some of our soldiers on patrol have to ask themselves each time they leave their base camps. Each time they enter a village, pass a school or playground, or just stop to talk to someone on the street.

There have been several reported incidents of local children pointing toy guns at Stabilization Force patrols throughout

the Multinational Division (North) area of operation. The toy guns so closely resemble a real handgun or rifle that they are not easily identifiable.

Many of the toys have identical parts similar to the real thing. Pistols have slides and magazines like the standard issue Beretta and sub-machine guns that have plastic bullets, collapsible stocks, and “banana clips.”

This is not the first time in the history of SFOR that children have pointed toy guns at SFOR personnel. They don't understand the risk they are taking when they point toy guns at other people, especially SFOR and law enforcement. The kids are having fun just being kids.

We must all be on alert and watch for



the “fakes.” It is important to be aware that this activity is taking place and to react appropriately. If you see a child, no matter what age, playing with what appears to be a toy gun, **you** must stop them and explain the dangers of what he or she is doing. Don't just explain it to the child though, explain it to the parent or guardian. Children and parents need to realize the dangers of pointing any gun, fake or not, at an SFOR soldier or law enforcement officer.

The response from parents has been positive and they appreciate the effort that SFOR is making to contribute to a safe and secure environment for their children. Let's work together and not have any unfortunate situations. **Roll On!**



Task Force Blue Steel brings color and smiles to local school children



Above, Spc. Robert Bennett, cook, A Co. 1st Bn., 109th Inf., shares colored pencils and laughs with his new friend, Emina, a 2nd grade student at Sehahid Bolic-Bolo Primary School in Olovo. Below, 1st Lt. Robert McAllister, 2nd platoon leader, tells a group of students a story about tolerance depicted in the coloring books later distributed.

Story and photos by
Sgt. 1st Class Kelly Luster

Editor, 354th MPAD



OLOVO, Bosnia — When infantry soldiers do any type of coloring it is usually their own faces with nothing more than shades of green. However, soldiers from A Co., 1st Bn., 109th Inf., recently spent some time putting some different color into the lives of the kids at Sehahid Bolic-Bolo Primary School.

The soldiers stopped by the school in Olovo to give the children Crayola crayons, colored pencils, coloring books, basketballs, soccer balls, and other material goods. Then several small groups of soldiers went classroom to classroom and spent time coloring with the kids.

Two soldiers from the 324th Psychological Operations Co. that were deployed to this country during SFOR XI designed the coloring books. The coloring books are part of an ongoing campaign to teach children tolerance. Each book features animal characters "getting along" despite their obvious differences in appearance.

Binney & Smith Inc., a Pennsylvania based company that has called Easton its home since the turn of the century, graciously donated the crayons and colored pencils. Capt. Lauren Muglia, deputy political advisor, Headquarters, Headquarters Company, 28th Inf. Div., worked with a representative for Binney & Smith to arrange the donation of several cases of crayons, as well as other materials to include colored pencils, coloring books, and paper.

1st Lt. Robert McAllister, 2nd Plt. leader, A Co., started the visit by speaking to an assembly of children from the first through the fourth grades. McAllister told the children a story using the characters from the coloring book.

"It's nice to get away from the daily grind here and do something for the kids. We have given them two important messages; tolerance and safety," said McAllister. "We're here to help this country have a secure future, well, these children are the future."

As the assembly neared completion, McAllister told the students, "We brought some presents for you. But you have to go back to your classrooms and we'll come around and give them to you." The children quickly exited the assembly room with the eagerness a child might feel on Christmas morning and headed back to their classrooms.

Groups of two or three soldiers visited each of the classrooms with a handful of coloring books and boxes of crayons. Pfc. Paul Granville, Bradley driver, 2nd Plt., A Co., said that this is one of the patrol's regular stops.

"We park outside this school when we come through this area. From here we walk our dismounted patrols." According to Granville, just being in the community helps provide stability. Olovo was situated along the front lines during the war.

"I think we are making a difference. We see some of the same faces every time we're here," said Granville. "Nedime shows up every time he sees us coming. He speaks great English and we had some conversations with him."

Granville said Nedime skips school regularly. That's one of the reasons they see him quite often. However, due to the soldiers' talks with Nedime, he says he will start going to class. "He's just one example of our presence here."

According to some of the soldiers

who visited the school, this is where SFOR starts to make a change in the future of BiH.

"We start with the kids. They are the future of this country," said Spc. Robert Bennett, cook, A Co. Bennett, who was married just four days before being mobilized, said he would spend time with these kids everyday if he could.

"I have a daughter who just started school this year. If I can't be with her at least I can be with other kids."

Bennett said he misses his daughter and, although the time lost cannot be replaced, he's somewhat compensated by spending time with the kids here.

Although many of the lessons taught during the visit took place within the walls of the school, some took place outside. Bennett said that while they were waiting to go inside, a young boy and his father walked by. The child was carrying what appeared to be a real pistol. It turned out to be a toy gun.

"Luckily, the gun was just a toy. It looked as real as any pistol we carry," said Bennett. "The slide on the thing worked exactly like the real thing."

One of the soldiers worked through a translator to explain to the child and his



Emina Sirco, a six-year-old student at Sehahid Bolic-Bolo Primary School in Olovo, Bosnia, searches out her favorite color — red.

father the dangers of the toy guns. "His father said he would be more careful letting him play with the toy guns," said Bennett.

Much the way autumn brings a change in the weather and new colors to the countryside, so too have the soldiers of Task Force Blue Steel put into motion a changes for the youth of Bosnia and Herzegovina.



Above, Sgt. Maribel Miller, strength NCO, 28th Inf. Div., shares a page with Dzevada during a visit to Sehahid Bolic-Bolo Primary School in Olovo, Bosnia. Left, a student listens intently as McAllister tells his story during the assembly.

SFOR XI Psyops soldiers teach children tolerance in a colorful way

by Spc. Jessica Abner

Assistant editor, 354th MPAD

People like Muppets creator Jim Henson entertained and educated children all over the world with his famous and memorable characters. The artwork of two Multinational Division (North) soldiers is intended to have a similar effect on children in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Pfc. Aaron Smith, illustrator, and Cpl. Joshua Reid, product development non-commissioned officer in charge, worked together to design a coloring book about animals with human characteristics and personalities. The book deals with similar issues children of Bosnia and Herzegovina face every day and teaches kids tolerance and diversity through educational pictures and activities. The idea for the book originated with the two SFOR XI soldiers, who are members of the 324th Psychological Operations Co.

"We don't want the children to end up hating each other. The coloring book demonstrates to the kids the importance of accepting each other for who they are, not how they look, where they come from, or their religion," said Smith. "This is achieved by having diverse characters interact and solve problems dealing with discrimination." The idea is to influence the children of Bosnia to deal with the same issues and learn to accept each other, regardless of their ethnic background.

"I have a great job. I couldn't ask for anything better," said Smith, who has been in the Army for two years. "We come up

with our own ideas. With the coloring book we just thought about what we enjoyed when we were kids, so the project was easy."

Smith and Reid said they recalled watching different cartoons and the Muppets when they were younger. Those characters come to mind when they work on



projects like the coloring book. While generations of children in the United States grew up watching characters like Kermit the Frog, some children in Bosnia and Herzegovina will grow up knowing Smith and Reid's character, Riki the Raccoon. "It's fun working on something like the coloring book for kids because you get to be really creative on that and other projects," said Reid.

Besides the coloring book, the pair

worked on other projects throughout their rotation.

"What we do is make different sorts of informational products for the MND (N) area," said Reid. "Our work ranges from radio scripts, newspaper ads, and television commercials, which are broadcast on Bosnian radio and television. We focus on events such as the harvest campaign to try to persuade people to turn in weapons."

The soldiers work with members of their unit to put together harvest videos. They develop their campaign related posters listing times and places where harvest events will take place. "We also did an elections campaign that's running right now to try to get the citizens to hold their leaders accountable," said Reid, acknowledging the importance of voting.

"It was a good experience," said Smith. When he returns home to California, he plans to attend college to study graphic design. Reflecting on the last six months, the creators of the coloring book said it was a good project.

"It was cool to see a culture that is different from our's," said Reid. He has been in the Army four years and is a microbiology major back home in Colorado.

The work of artists is commonplace in educational tools for children. Smith and Reid said they hope to contribute to providing a safe and secure environment by putting their creative skills to use.

The activities in the coloring book are intended to help the children realize that it is alright to stop the violence and hate towards each other and start building a better future.

A little kid's trivia

1. What is the dog's name in "The Grinch that Stole Christmas?"
2. Is Kermit the Frog left or right-handed?
3. What kind of wood was Pinocchio made from?
4. What is Donald Duck's middle name?
5. What did Charlie Brown's father do for a living?
6. Where was the hacky sac invented?
7. What color was the hundredth billion crayon produced by Crayola?
8. On Sesame Street, what are Bert's goldfish's names?
9. What was Wilma Flinstone's maiden name?
10. What was Betty Rubble's maiden name?

1. Max 2. Left-handed 3. Pine 4. Fauntleroy 5. Barber 6. Turkey 7. Periwinkle blue 8. Lyle and Talbot 9. Wilma Slaghoop 10. Betty Jean McBricker

Orphans win the hearts of U.S. soldiers

Story and photos by Spc. Jessica Abner

Assistant editor, 354th MPAD

TUZLA, Bosnia — On a cold, dismal day a military convoy approaches the Vojo Peri orphanage in Tuzla, where anxious children eagerly await the arrival of the uniformed visitors. Armed with candy, toys, and material donations, the soldiers are greeted with smiles and excitement from children. Their smiles shed light on the soldiers' day, and in return, the soldiers make the day a little brighter for the disadvantaged children.

"The kids are amazing. I was surprised the kids were so personable because they aren't used to this much attention," said Sara Mercinko, video-teleconferencing operator, Headquarters, Headquarters, Co., 28th Inf. Div. "The time spent with the kids means a lot to them, you can see it in their faces."

Each month, Task Force Eagle soldiers make the trek to the orphanage, which is home to approximately 150 children of varying ages. Each child has his or her own reason for being there. According to Maj. Charlotte Weiss, Combat Stress Control (CSC) Officer, Task Force Med Eagle, some parents do not have the means to support their children.

"His parents couldn't take care of him. Some children became orphans when their parents died during the war," said Weiss.

While deployed to Bosnia and Herzegovina, soldiers put their civilian lives on hold and leave behind their own children, brothers, sisters, nieces and nephews. The children's presence reminds some soldiers of their young loved ones back home. When they visit the kids at the orphanage, they are given the chance to make a connection — perhaps the connection they miss with their own children due to this mission far away from home.

"I miss my nephews at home and it was nice to have that interaction with the kids," said Spc. Sarah Rexwroth, battle sergeant, Headquarters, Headquarters, Co., 28th Inf. Div. "The kids were so cute. They run up to you and hug you and want to play."

Each soldier found a place among the kids. Some chose to play with the older kids while others spent time with the little ones. All of the soldiers who visited the orphanage participated in some activity. Soldiers could be found playing soccer, singing, listening to music, drawing, or hanging out with the kids.

Staff Sgt. Larry Cornwall, E Co., 1st Bn., 183rd Avn., said the trip to the orphanage meant a great deal to him. While growing up in a military family, he traveled around the world. When they lived in Iran, his family adopted a baby girl. With his sister in mind, he felt it was important to visit the orphanage.

"I think my sister is a wonderful person and I tell others that these kids need some attention and could use our help," said



Spc. Kathryn Salazar, 5501st Army Hospital, paints a heart on the face of a child who lives at the Vojo Peri orphanage in Tuzla.

Cornwall, who has played the guitar since the age of nine. In 1967, he was a Marine in Vietnam and played with a variety of musical groups such as Peter, Paul and Mary, Brothers Four, and the Highway Men. Now as a soldier in the United States Army, he continues to play guitar and sing. "I love playing for the kids, it really makes them happy," said Cornwall.

According to Kathryn Salazar, combat medic, 5501st Army Hospital, visiting the orphanage was a gratifying experience for the children as well as the soldiers. She said spending time with the children made her feel good and it was a great stress reliever.

"I just wanted a hug," said Salazar, who enjoyed painting faces and playing with the children.

Every month the Combat Stress Control team visits the orphanage in Tuzla and welcomes any soldier to go along.

"These children are the future generations of Bosnia and Herzegovina and we want them to understand that there is something better in life for them," said Weiss.

"There are some gifts in life that you cannot put a price tag on, because no amount of money would match its value — the laughter of a small child, holding a warm hand, a hug, the eyes of a child that smiles with joy," said Maj. Debra Stuart, head nurse, 5501st U.S. Army Hospital. "Whatever toy or candy they saw quickly became left by the wayside, and for a few hours we released our inner child. We gave the children a gift from the heart, and in return, the children, who had nothing to give, shared with us their own gifts of joy."



Left, Children gather around Staff Sgt. Larry Cornwall, E Co., 1st Bn., 183rd Avn., as he plays his guitar.

Right, Spc. Paul Mockler, 5501st Army Hospital, holds a child on his shoulders as they play outside.



